

## The First Iowa State Fair

ISSN 0003-4827

No known copyright restrictions.

---

### Recommended Citation

"The First Iowa State Fair." *The Annals of Iowa* 20 (1935), 151-152.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.5800>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

# ANNALS OF IOWA

---

## EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

---

### THE FIRST IOWA STATE FAIR

---

Former Senator C. J. Fulton of Fairfield writes of the article on "The County, District and State Agricultural Societies of Iowa" which was published in the July, 1935, ANNALS, as follows:

Fairfield, Iowa, August 9, 1935.

Mr. E. R. Harlan, Curator,  
Des Moines, Iowa.

Dear E. R.:

I take exception to two statements in the article, The County, District and State Agricultural Societies of Iowa, appearing in the July number of the ANNALS OF IOWA.

The fairground was, I quote, "surrounded by a ten-foot board fence."

It is improbable there was enough lumber in Fairfield in 1854 to build such a fence. The sawmills in the vicinity did not have the capacity to produce it on short order from native timber and any other could have been secured only by hauling it on wagons from Burlington or Fort Madison. Had it been available, the society had no funds for its purchase. There is no need for a speculative argument. The "Committee of Arrangements" in its report submitted on October 24, 1854, to the Board of Directors of the State Agricultural Society, states it was enclosed "with a substantial straight rail fence, ten feet high." In such a fence the rails are laid one above another, the ends lapping and held in place between two upright posts, one on either side at the laps. There were "wall guards" to see that trespassers did not climb over or sit on the fence.

Again I quote: "The feature of the second day was the show of the equestriennes. It was a very spectacular exhibition with the ladies doing their most daring stunts of side riding, bareback riding, and straight riding."

In the face of fact, this is exuberant and ebullient language. The scheduled contest in equestrianism took place on the second day, but by agreement it was repeated on the morning of the third day. It was at the second contest that the excitement of the crowd was generated. This was occasioned by one of the horses trying to run away and his mastery by the little girl riding him, an eyewitness of the incident informed me. There were no stunts, daring or otherwise. It was not a circus. Young ladies as these contestants certainly were, "splendidly

arrayed in long and sweeping riding habits, with feathers and ribbons to match," as the contemporary reports described them, could not have indulged in "bareback riding," or in riding astride, without at least partially disrobing. Divided skirts were not in fashion. They rode modestly on sidesaddles as they were accustomed to ride.

Yours truly,

C. J. FULTON.

---

### DEATH OF JOSEPH SVACINA

(From the *Catholic Forester* for July, 1935.)

---

Honest, quiet, unassuming Joseph Svacina, the trusted friend of the Indians, passed away at his home in Tama, Iowa, June 18, 1935, bringing to a close a career replete with incidents of human interest and the practice of the Christian virtues. He leaves to mourn him a loving wife, daughter and three sons who are a credit to his name.

In the discharge of his duties as financial secretary of St. Patrick's Court 1372 for the past eight years he was efficient and dependable and established a high standard of morale in the office.

Seldom in modern times has any one become so interested in the welfare of the Indian as did our late Brother Svacina. Next to his own kin, no one shared his great love of humanity, his never failing appraisal of human character, as did the four hundred men, women and children residing on the Tama Indian Reservation. He enjoyed their confidence to the utmost; they came to him for counsel and advice and he helped them financially by organizing their annual Pow-wow and placing it upon a substantial and paying basis. He looked upon them as so many forgotten children who were in need of the solace of companionship in a world that contrasts strikingly to the ancient traditions of their race.

He was the oldest business man in the town of Tama, having been established there in the harness and leather business for more than forty-two years. His funeral was one of the largest ever held in the town. A section of the church was reserved for the Indians and it was well filled; even some papooses were "toted" by squaw mothers who came to pay a last tribute to the

Copyright of *Annals of Iowa* is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.